

Blue Joint and Sapphire Wilderness Study Area (WSA) Trail Closures

The United States District Court decision from Judge Dana Christensen in *Bitterroot Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club et al v. United States Forest Service et al.* ordered the Bitterroot National Forest to conduct an objection response period regarding closure of trails within the WSAs to bicycles.

The court asked the Forest Service to clarify the miles of trails closed within the WSAs. Page 9 of the Record of Decision (ROD) states, “Motorized/mechanical transport, including bicycles, will be prohibited in the Sapphire and Blue Joint Wilderness Study Areas for both summer and over-snow use. This will include the closure of Trail #39 (Chain of Lakes) to these uses.” The ROD further states, on page 12, that the decision will “result in the prohibition of bicycles from approximately 68 miles of recommended wilderness areas (RWAs) and approximately 110 miles in . . . WSAs.” In calculating the miles of closures with the WSAs (p. 12 of the ROD), the Forest Service inadvertently omitted the two-track mileage of Trail 39 (3.35 miles) and Trail 313.5 (6.8 miles). Therefore, the total mileage closed to bicycles is approximately 121 miles. All closures were analyzed and accounted for in the FEIS (Chapter 3.3 and Appendix I) and ROD. The approximately 121 miles of closures within the WSAs includes 22.3 miles of overlap with trails within the recommended wilderness portion of the Blue Joint WSA.

The table below clarifies what trails are closed within the WSAs and their mileage (from Appendix I of the FEIS).

Blue Joint WSA		Sapphire WSA	
Trail Number	Miles	Trail Number	Miles
106 - Razorback Ridge	12.6	102 - Mosquito Meadows	1.1
137 - Jack the Ripper ¹	3	156 - Weasel Creek	1.7
138 - Chicken Creek	5.7	168 - Moose Creek	5.1
139 - Deer Creek	12.5	313.2 - Bitterroot Rock Cr. Divide N. end of MWSA to Trail 102	22.8
183 - Bare Cone	2.6	313.5 - Bitterroot Rock Cr. Divide Junction Trail 102 to FR 80	7.8
223 - Little Blue Joint	4.3	39 – Chain of Lakes	3.4
602 - Deer Creek Point	2.8	40 - Sign Creek	5.6
614 - Blue Joint ¹	14.7	420 - Sula Fish Lake	0.6
627 - Castle Rock ¹	4.6	421 - Faith Lake	1.8
Total	62.8	503 - Skalkaho-Jerry Lake	3.8
		77 - Railroad Creek	2.1
		83 - Kent Lake	0.7
		87 - Skalkaho-Sleeping Child Divide	1.3
		Total	57.8

1. Also within recommended wilderness